



# Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D. California Secretary of State Elections Division

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## Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum

VAAC members present:

- Fred Nisen
- Veronica Elsea
- Mathew Ptacek
- Mike Nguyen
- Rebecca Donabed
- Mary Helen Gallagos
- Roxana Castro

Members of SOS:

- Justin Hirai – Election Security Unit Manager
- Kirsten Larsen – Election Administration Manager
- Joanna Southard- Election Staff Service Manager
- NaKasha Robinson – Office of Voting Systems (OVSTA)
- Adam Quintana – Voter's Choice Act (VCA)
- Lauro Feliciano– Legislation

Quorum was met.

#### 2. VAAC Member Updates

Fred Nisen:

- Attended a VAAC meeting in Placer County about the EAP. Also attended a workshop about rank choice voting in Humboldt County.

Rebecca Donabed:

- Tulare county has new signs that are higher and larger print so drivers can see them better. Tulare County is looking for new locations to hold polling locations.
- Fresno County is redoing their website and getting the language translation to English and Spanish.

- Fresno County Registrar of Voters is going to partner with resources for Independent Central Valley to have a voter's workshop in October.
- Merced County has a special election going on in the city of Los Gatos to fill the vacancy seat on the City Council.

Roxana Castro:

- In Orange County they are in the middle of our ERP process.
- Just completed their public outreach public consultation workshops. They met with more than 630 individuals with 15 workshops in 9 of the required languages. One workshop for the accessibility community and five workshops being outlawed.
- Conducted consultation meetings with both our VAAC and LAAC and held 20 small group meetings targeted at language and accessibility organization. They are getting their direct feedback, and in the middle of working through writing our analysis of all the public input we have received.
- They are in the process of uploading our EAP by the end of the month followed by our public hearing in the middle of September 25th.
- Have our VAAC meeting next month in early September and we're also working with DRC on a panel for a cool event that we're going to be attending in Ventura County.
- Ventura County events happen through multiple days and its crossroads of how organizations and how county partners with disability organizations, it's a government agency partnering with accessibility organizations and how they come together to better their services. Our panel is going to be working with DRC dealing with how we establish partners within the transit with transportation organizations. Right now, the panel is focused on how a county increases partnerships with organizations that work with voters with disabilities.
- For the election administration plan our EAP process is part of the voter's choice act it has very specific requirements on what our consultations should consist of. At a minimum we must have community workshops for each of the required languages, one for the accessibility community and then we're also required to consult with our VAAC, LAAC and then our outreach committee. During our standard workshops with the public where it was creative to get public feedback on elements of the election administration plan.
- They are working with the VAAC and LAAC to get more feedback for certain items that we might be lacking and to fill in the gaps of outreach. They had low attendance in Spanish workshop so they are working with the LAAC to help identify organizations that can present to gather more public input within that community.

Mathew Ptacek

- No updates

Mike Nguyen

- No updates

Veronica Elsea

- No updates

Mary Helen Gallagos

- They have been working on doing an open house for our VAAC and LAAC which we had to reschedule. The ASL interpreters that they hired didn't show so we had to cancel.

### 3. Secretary of State Updates

OVSTA

- NaKasha: Several voting systems in varying stages. Hart InterCivic with a voting system full certification test. Los Angeles County also with the full voting system certification and election systems and software.
- For administrative approvals under voting systems, we have Dominion Voting Systems and LA county is awaiting administrative approval before us.
- We have RAVBM systems, and we have two full certification applications before us currently from one from Los Angeles County and one from Democracy Life. Once we get to the accessibility testing phase, we will extend an invitation to the VAAC and respective networks to participate in the testing phase. Once we get closer to those dates, they will be sure to give you adequate notice if you desire to participate in the accessibility test.
- If the system is going for full certification that means that it is going through our entire testing process from A through Z, which can take upwards of 12 months. If a system is before us for an administrative approval that means it's a very minimal or diminish change to that system where it does not have to go through the full certification process and that can take a couple of weeks to a couple of months to accomplish that's the difference.

Voter's Choice Act

- Adam: VCA continues to meet with VCA counties on a regular basis, counties that are working on renewing their election administration plans. 2 of the 12 counties have finalized their EAP and the Secretary of State has approved their education and average plans. These counties are Amador and El Dorado County. 2 out of 12 have completed their EAP renewals already we do have an administrative deadline for the remaining counties to complete their EAP and that deadline is December 1<sup>st</sup>. We

anticipate that all counties will be able to finalize their EAP renewables prior to the designated deadline.

- We also continue working closely with Imperial County as you all know Imperial County is transitioning to VCA model and the county plans to finalize the new EAP prior to December 1<sup>st</sup>. We know the county is working closely with the county LAAC/VAAC and members of the community and they're also working closely with an advocate from the disability rights California DRC.
- The next Voter Choice Taskforce meeting is tentatively being scheduled for September 18, and we anticipate that meeting to be from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM. This is a public meeting, so we plan to the meeting at a minimum of 10 days prior to the meeting date. We also plan to issue a CCROV posted on the website and provide the link where members of the public members of this state VAAC can click on the link and be able to attend the meeting.
- We anticipate all counties to complete their EAP despite a possible Special Election. We've been in communication with those counties and assessing progress we do believe that most counties if not all will be able to meet the deadline of December 1<sup>st</sup>. However, if counties need additional time we've planned for that ahead of time and so counties will have an additional 30 days potentially to be able to complete their EAP's and still within the 120 days prior to the election.

#### Legislation

- Lauro: SB 316 hearing was today, it was placed on suspense calendar by the some of the Appropriations Committee so that just to note that the legislative calendars last day for the fiscal committees to meet and report out the bills to the floor as August 29.
- SOS sponsored bills SB 1249 AB 1411 are coming back from recess on both on Senate Appropriations on 8/18 which was placed on suspense file. Appropriations Committees are focusing on fiscal impacts and bill analysis on noted physical health impacts to be over those thresholds for each Senate and assembly so those are the reasons why they are on suspense files.
- Joanna Southerland: Everyone's probably heard the legislature has introduced a few bills. SB 280 that would call a statewide special election specifically for a constitutional amendment ACA 8 which is related to redistricting and the file for the maps that the legislature just looking at is AB 604. They were introduced on Monday. I know that there were a couple of hearings yesterday at both the Assembly and Senate.

## 4. Working Group Updates

### Petitions/Signature Verification:

- We went through the responses that we received from the Secretary of States office. There are answers to some of the questions that we do not understand. Question #1, there being a requirement to have a witness put their name on the petition and the signature if the voter who's signing the petition cannot write their name and address. The voter does have to be able to sign their signature but if as a voter with any kind of disability cannot write their name and address on the petition then you need someone to do it for you. You will have to get a witness and our problem with this is that most petitions that we've looked at don't mention that it is a requirement. There is no room on for the witness to sign. How are people supposed to know about this requirement? We have looked through all the election codes that are cited in their response to this question, and it is kind of incumbent on the voter to know that this is a requirement.
- Question #2 We had been asking about whether a voter can use an address stamp. Does using an address stamp qualifies as filling out address? I couldn't find anything about this in the code, where it absolutely says handwritten must be used.
- Joanna Southard response: Question 1: You're right, it is not addressed in in statute of right, it's not addressed in the election. The legislature has not specifically addressed these but what that would require of legislation, the legislature would have to introduce legislative law to make that the change because unfortunately the Secretary of State can't add requirements above what's in the law. Question 2: If the voter needs assistance they can have someone assist them in writing, that's what the law says right now. They would have to get someone to assist and witness. The voter could have a signature stamp as long as it's in compliance with other portions of the elections code that's layout. Your signature must be verified against signature on record. If someone had the stamp as their original signature and their signature stamp matches. Because it's not addressed in the statute this can be brought to the legislature.
- Question 3: The person that is circulating the petition could not serve as a witness. We got the answer but are not aware of a provision in the Elections Code that prohibits a petition circulator from acting as a witness.
- Question 4: has been answered, and we understand their response.
- Question 5: How does a disabled voter know that their signature on a petition has been rejected due to lack of a witness signature? The answer we received was, there are no provisions in the Election Code that require a voter to be notified if their signature was rejected.

#### Curbside Voting:

- Our document that was approved in the last meeting was sent to the Secretary of State last week and sent to the counties via CCROV. Our work for this working group has been accomplished.

#### Outreach to Voters with Disabilities:

- This working group wants to stress that their goal is to reach the unreachable. We're trying to find a way to get a message to the public through the general marketing of election materials or PSA in counties. Just by adding one sentence to reach people who don't identify as disabled.

#### Increasing Accessibility for Voters who use ASL:

- We shared the document that you all have, and we decided to make a more formal recommendation by the next meeting. I will be putting together the recommendation and sending it to the working group members to review in the next month. Once we accomplish that we will share the document with you all at the next meeting in October.

#### 5. Public Comments and Future Agenda Items

- Next meeting – Wednesday October 29, 2025

#### 6. Adjournment